

Introduction

Background

Focus on Transition evolved from our work as co-authors of *Focus on Function*, published by Communication Skill Builders in 1989. Both works attempt to assist professionals and support personnel as they foster independence in daily functioning. Reviewers of *Focus on Function* indicated a desire for additional material with emphasis on higher cognitive functioning. Also, while working with our clients, we found that many had specific areas in which they wanted support, such as in finding employment or making travel plans. From the comforts of home to the excitement of travel, the tasks in *Focus on Transition* are designed to help individuals succeed in activities of daily living.

Contents

This new publication, *Focus on Transition*, provides clinicians with an activity-based approach to assist adolescents and adults with higher cognitive levels of daily activities. In addition to containing the more demanding material, *Focus on Transition* is organized into readily recognizable units that provide material in specific areas of need.

Focus on Transition contains realistic material that makes it a comprehensive and easy-to-use product. The material is geared toward individuals who are in need of cognitively based communication skills for planning, problem solving, making appropriate choices, following procedures, expressing ideas, organizing information, and other executive functions. The exercises are based on actual activities and tasks that adolescents and adults engage in on a regular basis. The material is both practical and meaningful.

In organizing *Focus on Transition*, we wanted to capture a wide range of themes that incorporate work and leisure events. The material is presented in ten units:

- ▶ Home and Work
- ▶ Mail and Correspondence
- ▶ Health Care
- ▶ Entertainment Choices and Word Games
- ▶ Print Media
- ▶ Reading Signs and Maps
- ▶ Employment, Applications, and Interviews
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ Money and Shopping
- ▶ Travel and Transportation

Each of the ten units contains lists of specific tasks and objectives. The tasks are described in terms of activities of functioning. Clients work on preparing daily, weekly, and monthly schedules; writing letters; making appointments; determining preferences for leisure time; locating written information; understanding signs and symbols; completing applications; understanding restaurant checks; reading transportation schedules and maps; paying bills; and many other tasks.

How to Use This Book

To use this book, the clinician or facilitator will focus on one unit at a time, based upon the client's interests. It may be beneficial to prioritize the client's functional communication skills (as related to speaking, listening, reading, and writing) as well as individual needs. For example, a retired man who enjoys eating in restaurants but can no longer manage to do so independently may benefit from practicing the tasks in the Restaurants unit. An individual who is planning to reenter the job market may require skills and training in completing job applications, and would begin working within the Employment, Applications, and Interviews unit.

Each unit highlights a number of objectives. For example, in the Mail and Correspondence unit, the section titled Writing Letters contains activities that include writing thank you notes, invitations, letters of complaint, personal letters, and business letters.

The clinician need not follow these units and exercises in any prescribed order, but may use the reproducible *Focus on Transition* Task Chart (pages 4–5) as a checklist to target areas of preference and completion. We recommend that the clinician monitor client performance by tallying the total number of items within a specific area and the number of items the client answered correctly to determine the percent correct for that task. We recommend an 80% success rate.

Functional outcomes are provided for each topic. These functional outcomes may be useful to the clinician when setting goals for insurance reimbursement or developing Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs).

Intended Audience

Focus on Transition is addressed to clinicians who work with adolescents and adults with higher-level cognitive deficits affecting communication. These individuals may be those who have suffered from head trauma, stroke, or other neurological impairments as well as those with learning disabilities or differences. Clients may need training in prerequisite skills if the activity is beyond their level of instruction. The clinician may decide to teach these skills and then continue with the activities in *Focus on Transition*. Special attention may be necessary for those clients who require augmentative or alternative communication systems. The prevalence of computers has enhanced the capabilities for individuals with specific communication disabilities.

Focus on Transition also is an excellent resource for adults in the welfare-to-work reform system. For many of these clients, the activities are geared toward functional employment in both job searches and job skills. The activities are beneficial and important as these adults forge ahead in the work force. Additionally, adolescents who must prepare themselves for independence at home, in the community, and at work will benefit from the tasks.

Focus on Transition is our attempt to provide the necessary materials for adolescents and adults to make the transition to independence and self-reliance.

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